FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions
Minnesota Trial Court Public Access (MPA)
Courthouse View & MNCIS Odyssey Assistant (OA)

For Use with MPA & OA Government Access

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How can government entities gain access to MNCIS Odyssey?

The Minnesota Judicial Branch offers two types of government access logon accounts that provide electronic remote access to case records within the MNCIS Odyssey system, as follows:

MPA (Minnesota Trial Court Public Access): MPA is offered to government entities via the internet. It provides the same level of access to court records that is available at public courthouse terminals including access to Register of Actions information on public case records, which includes party information, documents filed, hearings, dispositions, sentences, and fines and fee information. It does not provide access to confidential case records. If you need access to confidential case records, you must request OA access (described below). MPA is a web-based tool, accessible from the internet and requires no installation.

OA (Odyssey Assistant): OA provides the same information as MPA, but provides a richer view with additional search capabilities, including the ability to view calendars. It also provides access to confidential case records, for authorized agencies. If you need access to confidential cases, you must request OA. OA is a client-based access tool that requires technical support, installation, and has several technical prerequisites.

To obtain more information and/or to request access, please visit the Government Access Resource Center web site (http://www.mncourts.gov/mncis/govaccess). For a more detailed comparison of the screens and features of MPA and OA, on the above-referenced web site please scroll down to step one of the application packet and read the document titled "Understanding OA and MPA". It is a PowerPoint presentation that shows screen shots and discusses various features.

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Can we have access to both MPA and OA?

Yes; however, your office must make a separate request for each account.

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What are the fees for access to MPA and OA?

Currently there are no fees for OA or MPA government access login accounts. However, the nondisclosure agreement includes fee provisions, in the event that fees may be introduced at a future date. Agencies will be notified before any fees are imposed.

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How can we find out if either MPA or OA is not available?

When there are planned outages of either MPA or OA, a message is posted on the Government Access Resource Center web site (http://www.mncourts.gov/mncis/govaccess). If the court is experiencing unplanned system outages or performance issues, messages are posted on the same web site as soon as possible.

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We have experienced performance issues with OA. Will these be rectified?

The courts are working very closely with the vendor to rectify performance issues. You should also be aware that the internet speed to your office and PC capacity will also have an impact on the performance you experience. Please refer to the Policies & Notices for MNCIS Government Access Login Accounts found at the web site (http://www.mncourts.gov/mncis/govaccess) for information on technical requirements for OA access. To request technical support for your installation of OA, please visit the above-mentioned web site (scroll down to step six of the application packet and select option 2).

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Are other options available for electronic sharing of case record data between MNCIS Odyssey and government agencies?

The Minnesota Judicial Branch also provides an electronic data service called "Court Integration Services". This service is an enterprise-wide strategy of the Minnesota Judicial Branch to facilitate application-to-application electronic exchange of data between the courts and their business partners. The infrastructure that supports Court Integration Services is maintained by staff in the Information Technology Division of State Court Administration. General data exchange services have been developed for use by authorized court business partners. Please refer to our Integration Services web site (http://www.mncourts.gov/is) for information on what is available and how you could participate. It should be noted that if an agency is interested in electronic data exchange, there is work required by the agency in order to participate in that exchange of data which is noted on the web site listed above.

CriMNet also provides some integration services, one of which is e-charging. Please refer to their web site (http://www.crimnet.state.mn.us/) for more information.

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The printed court calendar is quite long and/or cumbersome to navigate. Can this be changed?

There are various versions of the printed calendar available within MNCIS Odyssey. Each version provides a varying amount of detail and as a result the length of the calendar is affected by the amount of detail displayed.

Each court administrator location determines the calendar version(s) to use based on their needs. Discussions between county attorney and court administrator may assist in better understanding why a court utilizes the version(s) of the calendar at that location.

If your office has access to OA, you are also able to generate three versions of the court calendar yourselves: Summary, Basic, and Detail. However, these printed calendars can only be generated on a session by session basis.

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The hearing name that appears on hearing notices that are generated don't always accurately represent the issues being addressed in that hearing. Can this be changed?

There are a variety of hearing codes available for court administration to use when scheduling hearings. Most hearings have a code that accurately reflects the intent of the hearing; however, this is not always the case. Practices for the type of hearings scheduled may vary across counties. There are no plans at this time to create more detailed hearing codes.

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Is there a way to request a list for a specific hearing type?

If you have MPA access, the answer is no. There is no way to do this. If you have OA access, you have a couple of different options:

- You can use the "Find a Hearing" option found in the "Searches" section of the navigation bar to locate all requested hearing types by the attorney's bar number or name. The resulting list however, cannot be printed.
- You could go to "View Court Calendar" and locate the court session that contains jury trials and generate a calendar for that particular court session.

Functionality beyond this would require additional funding for an enhancement to OA. No plans are underway by the courts to fund this type of enhancement at this time.

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Why doesn't MNCIS Odyssey recognize all charges?

A charge identified in a complaint or on a citation may not be recognized in MNCIS Odyssey when:

1. The code does not exist in the Offense Table.
2. The code exists but the code cannot be used in the charging field because of its classification.
3. The code is not valid for the offense date.
4. The offense level in the charging document is different from that in the Offense Table.

1. The code does not exist in the Offense Table.

The offense table in MNCIS Odyssey is a work in progress. Offense codes may not exist when:

- The offense is located in a chapter not generally associated with criminal or traffic offenses and is not frequently charged.
- The offense date pre-dates the current offense codes. Generally, offense codes were added prospectively. There may not be an appropriate offense code available for some offenses with offense dates in the 1980s and 1990s.
- A legislative change was not identified (i.e., when the reviser has changed a clause from numbers to letters and that change was not caught in the legislative review).

Missing offense codes are added when a request is submitted.   Requests to add offenses can be submitted in two ways:

- Court staff may submit a Service Desk Ticket.
- The prosecutor's office may submit a request to the Minnesota Criminal Justice Statute Service.

Efforts already are being used to minimize the risk of missing offense codes, prospectively. Working in coordination with the Minnesota Criminal Justice Statute Service, we have improved the process for reviewing legislative changes and making necessary changes to the MNCIS Odyssey offense table.

2. The code exists but the code cannot be used in the charging field because of its classification.

There are times when an offense code exists in MNCIS Odyssey for the statute or the first statute cited for a charge but that code cannot be entered into the charge field. The reason is the classification assigned to the offense code. The classification of an offense code determines which field(s) that code may be entered into.

The classification for the offense code is dependent upon the information in the statute.   There are three classifications: charging, non-charging, and both. The standards applied for assigning the classification is based on those set by the Minnesota Criminal Justice Statute Service Advisory Board. The classifications correspond with the "Functions" in the Statute Service.

An offense code can be used only in a field for which it has been configured (set up). Generally, an offense code is configured as:

- "Charging" if it contains the offense elements.   Offense codes so configured only can be entered in the "charge" field in MNCIS Odyssey.
- "Non-charging" if it contains definitions, penalties, exceptions, modifiers/GOCs, or incomplete offense elements. Offense codes so configured only can be entered in the "additional statutes" field in MNCIS Odyssey.
- "Both" if it contains both Charging and Non-charging data. Offense codes so configured can be entered into both the charge and additional statutes field in MNCIS Odyssey.

The classification of some offense codes is easier than others, depending upon how the statute is written.   Frequently, a complete charge is comprised of citations to two or more statutes, subdivisions, paragraphs, or clauses that have corresponding offense codes. When this happens, MNCIS Odyssey is able to have only one offense code entered in the charge field. However, offense codes for the other statutes comprising the complete charge can be entered into the Additional Statutes field, enabling all of the component parts of the complete charge to be recorded. In many situations where the first statute listed is not configured as a "charge" or "both", the second one is. In those situations, a solution would be to enter the offense code classified as a "charge" or "both" into the charge field and enter the offense codes for the other statutes listed in the Additional Statutes field. Court staff should confer with the prosecutor before doing so.

How offense codes are classified also has been affected by the evolution of the Statute Service and MNCIS Odyssey Offense Table. As standards have evolved, so have the offense codes and their classifications. The result is that the classifications for some offense codes may not be consistent with the standards currently applied. In those situations the classification may be changed upon request. Requests to change a classification can be submitted by court staff via a Service Desk Ticket.

When there is a classification issue identified, the State Court Administrator's Office staff attorney will review the classification, and compare it to the function(s) in the Statute Service.

- If application of current standards supports a classification change, that change will be made.
- If application of current standards does not support a change, the State Court Administrator's Office will suggest use of another offense code that appears applicable, and request a review by the Legal Analyst for the Statute Service, if necessary.
- If the prosecutor disagrees with the determination following review by the Legal Analyst, then the prosecutor may request review by the Minnesota Criminal Justice Statute Service Legal Review Committee.

3. The code is not valid for the offense date.

There are times when an offense code exists in MNCIS Odyssey but entry of that code results in an offense date error message. A date error message appears when the offense date is outside the effective period of that offense code is entered into the charge field.

An offense code is added when a new statute is enacted or an existing statute is amended.

- Each offense code is given an effective date (generally the known effective date of the statute) and that code cannot be used for offenses occurring before the effective date of the statute or amendment.
- When a statute is repealed or amended, a current existing offense code is given a repeal date, and that code cannot be used for offenses occurring on or after that repeal date.
- An offense code with a repeal date can be used when the offense occurred within the effective period of that offense code.

Offense date error messages tend to arise in two circumstances:

1. As a result of recent statutory amendments. The incidents of reported offense date error messages tend to increase for a few months after each legislative session.
2. When offense codes are added to cases started in TCIS or another case management system and converted to MNCIS Odyssey.

In either event there are 3 common issues:

1. An amended statute has been cited for an offense committed prior to the effective date of the amendment;
2. The statute cited had been amended or repealed before the offense date; or
3. An offense code for that offense date is missing.

If court staff reports an error message to the prosecutor, the prosecutor may be able to resolve the problem directly by checking the statute in effect on the date of offense. If that does not resolve the issue, then court staff should submit a Service Desk Ticket. The State Court Administrator's Office staff attorney assigned to review the Service Desk Ticket will:

- Identify the statute in effect at the time of the offense.
- Determine if an applicable, repealed offense code already exists.
- Add missing offense codes when necessary.
- Provide relevant information to support the addition of new codes or use of an existing code, including statutory language in effect at the time of offense, to prosecutors, either directly or indirectly through court staff.

4. The offense level in the charging document is different from that in the Offense Table.

There also are times when an offense code exists but it is not configured (set up) for the offense level charged. This problem tends to arise in two circumstances:

1. When a violation of one statute or subdivision is an enhanced offense under another statute or subdivision.
2. When the same offense code applies to multiple offenses.

One example of the first situation is domestic assault under Minn. Stat. § 609.2242. As the statute is written, the misdemeanor offense is identified in subd. 1, the gross misdemeanor offense is in subd. 2, and the felony offense is in subd. 4. The offense codes are configured (set up) to correspond with the statute.   As the gross misdemeanor offense requires a violation of subdivision 1, and a felony offense may require a violation of the section, the codes for subdivision 1 (1) and (2) and subdivision 2 have classifications of "both". This enables the subd. 1 offense codes to be entered in the charge field for misdemeanor offenses, and in the additional statutes field for gross misdemeanor and felony offenses, when applicable.   Similarly, the offense code for subdivision 2 can be entered in the charge field for gross misdemeanor offenses and in the additional statutes field for felony offenses, when applicable. The complete charge for the gross misdemeanor and felony offenses can be entered into MNCIS

Odyssey in this way.

The second situation is less common. There are some offenses with identical offense codes. Offense codes are comprised of the chapter, section, and applicable subdivision, paragraphs and clauses, without punctuation. Occasionally, different statutes can end up with identical offense codes. These codes are distinguishable based on the description and the reference identification number supplied by the Statute Service. Usually, these problems may be resolved by selecting the other available code, unless there also happens to be another issue such a classification issue or an offense date issue.

Requests to add or change the offense level for an offense code can be submitted in two ways:

- Court staff may submit a Service Desk Ticket.
- The prosecutor's office may submit a request to the Minnesota Criminal Justice Statute Service.

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Will court administration staff have the ability to "overwrite" a statute that MNCIS Odyssey does not recognize as a valid statute?

Accurate data is everyone's problem. Courts are doing their part by taking a proactive approach. Benefits of validating statutes at filing are:

- Issues are addressed at the point of entry into the court's case management system (before data is passed to other criminal justice agencies).
- It brings issues to the prosecutor and law enforcement's attention for early resolution.

Validation at the source is the goal of the criminal justice system.

The courts are working with the Minnesota Criminal Justice Statute Service to synchronize the data in the Statute Service and MNCIS Odyssey offense table. Enabling overwrites would undermine this collaborative effort. Offense codes not only contain information about the statutes (offense elements, penalties, definitions, effective and repeal dates, offense levels, etc.) but also contain various information necessary for processing the charges throughout the case relating to data passes to other systems such as BCA and DVS; fine and fee information affecting the imposition and distribution of fines; and set flags such as targeted misdemeanor and predatory offender registration.

Court staff does have the ability to put in a "temporary" placeholder statute while any statute discrepancies are being worked on; however, a valid statute must be provided to the court as soon as possible. Court staff is not allowed to enter disposition on this "temporary" placeholder statute. When there are issues with offense codes there are two means available for review of the problem and the addition of appropriate codes when necessary. Court staff may submit a Service Desk Ticket. Prosecutors may submit a request to the Statute Service web site (https://webservices.crimnet.state.mn.us/statute/search.jsf).

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What is the best way to locate specific disposition information for a defendant?

Note: Criminal background checks should be conducted using the BCA Computerized Criminal History (CCH) system. The BCA's CCH system links prior criminal history through fingerprints to verify the identification of the individual. Disposition information is included in the BCA's CCH system.

Nonetheless, you can use MNCIS Odyssey to search for and locate disposition information for a particular defendant.

If you have MPA access, you will need to perform a search by the defendant's name, access each case and print the "register of actions" returned for each case.

If you have OA access, you can do one of two things:

1. Access the case you are interested in. Click on the "Register of Actions" hyperlink found on the Summary tab of the case and use the "Print" button to get a hard copy of the information.
2. To obtain a report of all cases associated with a particular defendant, you will need to perform a Case search by defendant's name, access the party record attached to the cases, by clicking the

blue "name" hyperlink, click on the Cases tab and use the "print" icon to generate a report of all cases (along with disposition information) for that defendant. This output can then be printed by clicking on the "Print" button found at the bottom of the dialog.

Note that it is possible to see a blue hyperlink for a defendant listed more than once. If this should occur, you will need to first verify that the subsequent name(s) listed is indeed the same person and then repeat the steps listed above to generate a report for all cases attached to that occurrence of the name.

Functionality beyond this would require additional funding for an enhancement to MNCIS Odyssey. No plans are underway by the courts to fund this type of enhancement at this time.

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Is there a way to search for records in MNCIS Odyssey by less complete information, such as a last name only, date of birth only, driver's license number only, etc.?

The "Find a Case" option in OA allows for this, if you click on the "Use Advanced Search" button found in the upper right-hand corner of this page. Upon clicking on this button, the page expands showing you several extra fields that can be used to search for a case. You can fill in one or more fields on this page to locate the case you are interested in locating. Listed below is a fairly comprehensive list of data elements you can use through this Advanced search option to locate cases:

Case specific search options:
- Case number
- Citation number
- Filed dates (specific dates or within a range)
- Vehicle license number (if available)
- Arrest control #
- Attorney information
  - Last name
  - First name
  - Middle name
  - Bar number

They can search all cases or narrow this search by case type and specific court.

Party identifiers:
- Last name
- First name
- Middle name
- Date of Birth
- Date of Death
- Driver's license
- Bar number
- FBI number
- State ID number
- Other agency number (such as Hennepin's SILS number or Ramsey's IDENT number)
- Party type – for party searches only, meaning the connection a party has to a case such as criminal defendant, civil defendant, civil plaintiff, attorney, guardian, etc.

Note: Name searches for parties and attorneys in MNCIS Odyssey can also utilize Soundex, which means that the spelling entered need not be completely correct as long as three or more letters are entered and the first letter is correct, or Wildcards (*) which allow for partial entry of a name to search.

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